

NEWS FROM THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

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Delawareans Urged to Keep an Eye on Daily Air Quality Forecast

Sunny days and hot temperatures combined with emissions from autos, industry and other sources can result in ground-level ozone pollution that can be harmful to your health. DNREC's Air Quality Management Section urges Delawareans to keep an eye on the daily air quality forecast this summer and take steps when ozone reaches unhealthy levels. Ground-level ozone forms during warm weather when pollution "bakes" in the hot sun, making it difficult for some people to breathe. High levels of ground-level ozone irritate lung passages and can cause serious health problems for many people, especially children, seniors, and people with asthma and other respiratory ailments.

DNREC's Air Quality Management Section measures hourly ozone levels at nine monitoring stations located throughout the state. Delaware's ozone data, along with data from other states, is used to develop a daily air quality forecast. In most cases, air quality forecasts are made a day in advance, by 2 p.m., and valid for the next day. May marks the beginning of Delaware's ozone forecasting season, which runs through September 30. Forecasts are posted on DNREC's website, <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/AQI/Pages/AQIForecast.aspx>, and include a color-coded rating scale that makes it easy for people to understand – green and yellow codes to signify good and moderate air quality, orange for unhealthy ozone levels for sensitive people, and red warns of unhealthy ozone levels for everyone.

DNREC announces Air Quality Action Days when the amount of ground-level ozone is predicted to approach unhealthy levels and the federal standard for ozone could be exceeded. DNREC's website, along with local television and radio stations, alerts the public to an Air Quality Action Day prediction. You can also sign up for an email alert at: <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/Pages/DNRECLists.aspx>. DNREC's ozone alert system is part of the agency's longstanding commitment to communicate environmental conditions to the public. A Code Red Air Quality Action Day means that people susceptible to the effects of poor air quality should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors, and everyone should reduce outdoor activities. When Code Orange is forecasted, susceptible people should limit strenuous outdoor activities.

"We urge people to check the air quality forecast on our website or sign up for email notifications," said David Fees, Air Quality Management Section program manager. "People should take precautions to protect themselves on days when air pollution exceeds healthy levels."

"We urge people to check air quality forecasts, learn about what causes poor air quality, and find out what they can do to help make our air cleaner – not just during ozone season, but year round," continued Fees. "We encourage everyone to do their share for cleaner air."

DNREC's website, <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/AQI/Pages/AQIForecast.aspx>, includes a comprehensive list of actions citizens can take to help reduce ozone pollution that include:

- Ride public transportation, carpool, bicycle or walk whenever possible.
- Limit daytime driving and combine errands for less vehicle trips.
- When you must drive, try to avoid congested periods of the day.
- Maintain your vehicle's emission control equipment.

- Postpone the use of gasoline-powered mowers until evening.
- Refuel your car in the evening - and don't top off your tank.
- Avoid lighting your barbecue with starter fluid.
- Avoid prolonged idling and jackrabbit starts.
- Use latex rather than oil-based paints.
- Adjust your thermostats to reduce air conditioning.
- Close blinds during the day to conserve energy.
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For more information on air quality, visit <http://www.awm.delaware.gov/Pages/AirQuality.aspx>.